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ABSTRACT

This guide discusses the educational requirements of economically disadvantaged at-risk students as reflected in the research literature and provides specific recommendations on how schools can be more effective in addressing their needs. Eight major research findings concerning low income students at risk of dropping out of school are discussed. Following the presentation of each major finding is a set of specific recommendations designed to help educators tailor local programmatic responses. They are offered not as comprehensive answers, but rather as guideposts to provide direction to the local program development process. These recommendations were derived from a comprehensive review of the research literature, and are supplemented by the experience of educational consultants whose expertise includes the development and evaluation of programs for students who are members of racial or ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged or limited English proficient. Specific topics covered include: (1) expectations and success; (2) organizational operations; (3) curriculum and instruction; (4) sense of belonging; (5) socioemotional, health, and nutritional needs; (6) economic needs; (7) parental involvement; and (8) preschool education. (ABL)

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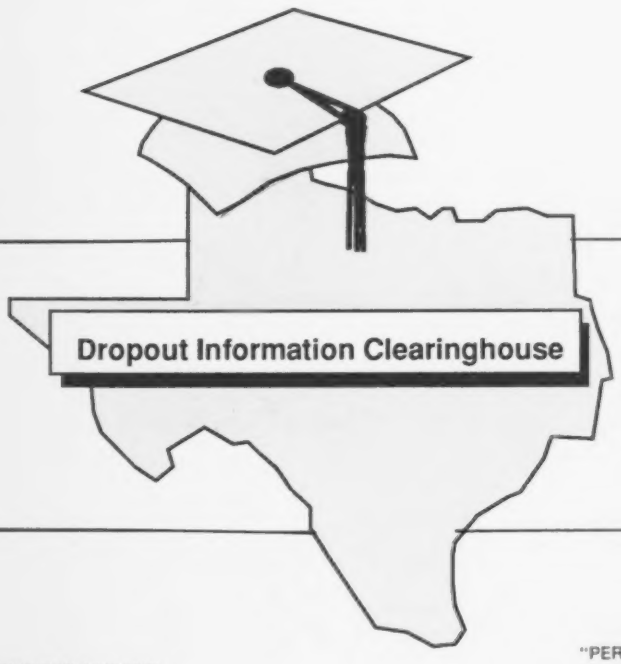
Successful Schooling For Economically Disadvantaged At-Risk Youth

"Information is a Key to Dropout Prevention"



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Successful Schooling for Economically Disadvantaged At-Risk Youth

Practitioner's Guide Series Number Three

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INTRODUCTION

Economically disadvantaged children have always been a part of the American public school system. However, they did not become a focus of national attention until the 1960's and the onset of the national "War on Poverty." The issue of how to provide effective instruction for economically disadvantaged students has recently reemerged with the nation's focus on education of at-risk youth. This guide discusses the educational requirements of economically disadvantaged at-risk students as reflected in the research literature and provides specific recommendations on how schools can be more effective in addressing their needs.

Who Are The Economically Disadvantaged Students?

Economically disadvantaged students are usually defined by utilizing one or a combination of federal and state definitions. The federal definition for "economically disadvantaged" is based on poverty guidelines established by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. These guidelines take into account the financial resources available to a family and then adjust the level of poverty based on the number of persons living in the household (see Appendix). The average poverty threshold for a family of four in 1986 was $11,203 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1988). In Texas schools, economically disadvantaged students are defined as those eligible for free or reduced price meals in the School Lunch Program. National family poverty guidelines are also used to establish eligibility for this program.

How Many Economically Disadvantaged Children Are There And How Many of Them Live In Texas?

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the number of persons living below the national poverty level was 32.4 million in 1986 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1988). According to the Children's Defense Fund (1988), approximately 13 million, or 40 percent of those individuals, are children below the age of 18. Of the total U.S. population, 20 percent of all children are living in low-income families (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1988), and 11 percent of all Whites, 31 percent of all Blacks, and 27 percent of all Hispanics are considered to be low-income.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, "poverty rates fell dramatically during the 1960s, decreasing from 22 percent to 12 percent in 1969, with the number of poor declining from 39.9 million to 24.1 million. From 1978 to 1983, however, the number of persons in poverty increased by 44 percent, rising from 24.5 to 35.3 million. There was little significant change in poverty statistics in 1985 and 1986, although the percentages are somewhat below the 1983 rate of 15.2 percent" (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1988, p. 1.) While the national percentage of persons living in poverty has not changed dramatically in the last few years, both the number and percentage of children living in poverty has increased, rising from 9.9 million in 1979 to 12.7 million in 1986 (Children's Defense Fund, 1988).

The poverty rate in Texas is slightly higher than the national average. In 1985, an estimated 2,605,000 Texans earned less than federally specified poverty levels. This number represented about 15.9 percent of the total state population. U.S. General Accounting Office figures for 1986 indicated that 118,107 households in Texas received food stamps and 196,290 families received low-income housing assistance (Shapiro and Greenstein, 1988b). Children represent 30 percent of Texas' total population, and one out

of four of these children live in poverty. Forty-three percent of all low-income children in Texas are Hispanic; 42 percent are Black; 10 percent are White and the remaining 5 percent are Asian or Native American (Harris, 1988).

According to figures supplied by the Texas Education Agency, an estimated 564,400 students were identified in 1980 as meeting federal Chapter 1 low-income guidelines. More recent statistics indicate that approximately 1,214,800 students met the state's low-income criteria and qualified for free or reduced price meals in the School Lunch Program for 1988. Review of available statistical information reveals that almost all school systems in Texas include low-income students (Texas Education Agency, personal communication, 1988). The following table summarizes information on poverty in the United States and Texas.

POVERTY IN THE U. S. AND TEXAS

U.S.

Estimated Number of Persons Living Below Federal Poverty Levels[1]	**32,400,000**
Percent of U.S. Population in Poverty[1]	15.2%
Persons in Poverty Below Age 18[1]	13,000,000
Percentage of Persons in Poverty Below Age 18[1]	40%
Poverty Rates by Ethnicity:[1]	
Whites	11%
Blacks	31%
Hispanics	27%

Texas

Estimated Number of Persons Living in Poverty[2]	**2,605,000**
Percent of Texas Population Living in Poverty[2]	15.9%
Number of Households Receiving Food Stamps[2]	118,107
Number of Households Receiving Low-Income Housing Assistance[2]	196,290
Children Below Federal Chapter 1 Low-Income Guidelines in 1980[3]	564,460
Children Meeting State Low-Income Guidelines in 1988[3]	**1,214,839**

Notes: [1]Poverty in the United States 1986. (1988). U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

[2]Holes in the Safety Nets: Poverty Programs and Policies in the States, Texas. (1988b). Shapiro, I., and Greenstein, R. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

[3]Texas Education Agency. (1988). Austin, TX.

How Many Economically Disadvantaged Students Are At Risk Of Dropping Out Of School?

Early studies on the relationship between income level and scholastic achievement suggest that socioeconomic status (in the absence of effective school intervention) is a major predictor of academic success (Jencks et. al., 1972). More recent investigations show that students from low-income households are at a higher risk of dropping out. This may be due to economic pressures and because many low-income environments are not supportive of education. A recent IDRA study of undereducated youth in the United States found that young people living in poverty were twice as likely to be undereducated as those from more affluent families (Cárdenas, Robledo, and Waggoner, 1988).

What Does Research Say About The Relationship Between Being Economically Disadvantaged And Not Doing Well In School?

Research shows that poverty and undereducation are cyclical and interdependent. The Education Testing Service concluded that the majority of the adults who received Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits in 1983 demonstrated reading and mathematics skills below the eighth grade level (Harris, 1988). Early research on the effects of poverty on children's educational futures also tended to approach the issue in a derogatory manner: students from low-income families were perceived as "disadvantaged," "limited," or "deprived" (Coleman et al., 1966; Jencks et al., 1972).

More recent studies on the effectiveness of programs targeting at-risk low-income youth indicate that those based on negative assumptions about students do not succeed (LeCompte, 1987). Researchers have also identified potential barriers that have an impact on the effective schooling of at-risk students and the relative success of programs targeting these populations (Levin, 1985; Ochoa et. al., 1987; Olson, 1988).

Cárdenas and Cárdenas (1973) proposed that there may in fact be intrinsic incompatibilities between some schools and children from low socioeconomic backgrounds which hinder effective schooling. Their model identifies areas of incompatibility and proposes that these schools make adjustments in specific areas to accommodate these differences.

Can Schooling Make A Difference In The Academic Performance Of Low-Income Students?

Research on effective schools indicates that schools can successfully educate children regardless of their economic status (Brookover et al., 1982). In addition, studies of the effects of programs such as Headstart offer evidence that early intervention can improve future academic performance (Clements et al., 1984; Lally, Mangione and Honig, in press).

What Can Educators Do To Ensure That Schools Work For Economically Disadvantaged Students Who Are At Risk Of Dropping Out?

Educators can ensure that schools effectively teach economically disadvantaged students who are at risk of dropping out by supporting the concept that excellent education can be available for all. Equal educational opportunities and high standards which promote academic excellence should be provided to all students, including low-income students.

This guide discusses eight major research findings concerning low-income students at risk of dropping out of school. Following the presentation of each major finding is a set of specific recommendations designed to help educators tailor local programmatic responses. They are offered not as comprehensive answers, but rather as guideposts to provide direction to the local program development process. These recommendations were derived from a comprehensive review of the research literature, and are supplemented by the experience of educational consultants whose expertise includes the development and evaluation of programs for students who are racial or ethnic minorities, economically disadvantaged or limited English proficient.

This document is intended to further the belief that schools can work: adults can succeed as professionals, children can learn and become empowered by learning, and communities can believe that schooling contributes to individual and collective economic growth, stability and advancement.

This document, then, is about scholastic success and how to achieve it. Schools that successfully educate economically disadvantaged at-risk children employ administrators and teachers who envision the entire educational system as striving to meet the needs of every student. What works are sound, effective, and efficient educational strategies that encourage students to remain in school. By understanding how the school environment may contribute to a student's failure, educators and other local service providers can identify and change those institutional barriers that may block later success. This effort requires a dedicated staff that will work together to meet student needs by using all resources available in creative and effective ways. An informed staff collaborating with one another, remaining open to new ideas and allowing for flexibility without sacrificing high educational goals can make the difference between educational success and failure.

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EXPECTATIONS AND SUCCESS

EXPECTATIONS AND SUCCESS

Research Finding:

Expectations and success in school are directly related.

The expectations of teachers, administrators, and other adults influence student performance in school. Socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and gender are among the demographic factors shaping teacher attitudes toward students. These attitudes include teacher expectations regarding student academic performance (Cooper, Baron, and Lowe, 1975). One study comparing the reading performance of ethnically diverse students suggested that a teacher's expectations regarding the academic potential of a child in his or her first year of school are often directly related to the child's race and socioeconomic status (Rist, 1970). Once students are viewed as low achievers, these expectations may in turn become self-fulfilling prophecies.

The U.S. Civil Rights Commission (1973) conducted a number of studies in the 1970's which documented the preferential treatment of some students as a function of social class, race, and ethnicity. This research indicated that affluent Anglo students often received preferential treatment over low-income ethnic minority students. Teacher expectations may have served to contribute to this differential treatment. Labels commonly used to designate students as "disadvantaged" or "deprived" may create a negative perception of these children (Mazer, 1971).

Class, race, ethnicity, and gender are demographic factors that may influence judgment and behavior at all levels of the educational system. The negative expectations some educators hold for economically disadvantaged at-risk students are, according to researchers (Gollub and Sloan, 1978), important reasons why these students are not making optimal progress.

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HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Recommendation:

Effective principals communicate high expectations.

Effective schools research highlights the pivotal role of the principal in the educational process. A major correlate of effective schools is a principal who promotes academic emphasis, creates organizational structures to support academic emphasis, and behaviorally demonstrates the belief that all students will master academic content. This document's recommendations support those notions, with the caution that the emphasis on academic achievement should not override a positive and optimistic perception of each student's learning potential.

Attributes of some positive approaches to communicating high expectations include the following:

- Principals model positive expectations through their own behavior toward teachers and students.
- Principals encourage participation in decision-making by inviting the ideas of staff and students to solve problems.
- Principals strive to make encouragement and support for success the norm, and punitive consequences for misbehavior a secondary or last resort.
- Remediation programs are based on students' strengths, potential, and positive possibilities. These programs are given positive names, rather than "remedial," "limited," or "disadvantaged."
- Procedures and actions for managing a campus are reviewed to identify any that assume limitations, underachievement, or "the lack of." Using the assumption that all students can learn, faculty and other staff develop ways to help all students succeed.
- Campus-wide assessment procedures identify what is positive, unique, and good in each student, teacher and staff member. Management plans are developed from these identified strengths and goals are set on the assumption that everyone can succeed.
- Peer praise and mutual validation by staff are encouraged.

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ENCOURAGEMENT

Recommendation:

Use encouragement to support independence, self-esteem, risk-taking, and acceptance of others.

Encouragement is an important component of academic success. Encouragement is best when it is specific, teacher-initiated and one-on-one. It focuses on improvement, is sincere and natural in tone, sets up success, supports student self-appreciation, and avoids comparison and competition.

Some suggestions for encouragement are listed below:

- Identify and verbalize in private the strengths of each student.
- Encourage regularly and systematically.
- Be spontaneous and offer fresh encouragement.
- Acknowledge effort toward a specified goal or performance criteria.
- Comment on the correct aspects of incorrect responses. Even if an answer seems completely incorrect, indicate the logic of the incorrect response.
- Expand on correct portions of student responses.
- Point out student competence and the value of accomplishments.
- Relate present encouragement to the prior accomplishments of the student.
- Comment on success or progress within the context of the difficulty of the task for the student addressed.
- Imply that current successes are replicable.
- Use oral, written, symbolic, and tangible rewards as encouragement for a broad spectrum of classroom tasks and activities.
- Encourage students to obtain mastery out of personal enjoyment and the desire to acquire new skills.
- Comment favorably on students' outside interests, hobbies, and behaviors that complement classroom instruction.
- Create systems for peer encouragement in the classroom and support mutual validation by students.

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MONITOR TEACHING

Recommendation:

Monitor teaching to identify and change negative expectations and behavior.

Teacher expectations can become self-fulfilling prophecies. A teacher should observe his or her own behavior in the classroom and replace actions and comments that may reflect negative expectations with those demonstrating positive attitudes. Teachers may use any of several systems available for self-monitoring. Characteristics of teacher behaviors which may suggest discrepancies in the way teachers treat economically advantaged versus disadvantaged students are:

- Variance in the amount of interaction;
- Quantity of questions that elicit higher-order thinking skills;
- Follow-up and probing questions, or less patience with slower, less accurate responses;
- Amount of wait time for responses;
- Student seating patterns;
- Amounts of praise and criticism;
- Supportive versus dominating behavior;
- Frequency of detailed, accurate, and precise feedback; and
- Amount of work and effort required.

Other teachers are an excellent source to observe and give feedback as a tool for self-improvement in this area. For example a teacher could, invite a colleague to observe a class using a predetermined checklist of interactions then meet later for feedback on the observation. Teachers could then contract with the colleague for specific future behavioral changes.

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TEACHING STYLE

Recommendation:

Use a wide variety of teaching styles.

Students have a variety of preferred learning styles, and there are many approaches to teaching. The key elements of learning style include:

Environmental Elements -- sound, light, temperature, building and room design.

Emotional Elements -- motivation, persistence, responsibility, need for structure.

Sociological Elements -- peers, self, pair, team, adult, or some combination thereof.

Physical Elements -- perceptual strengths, intake, time of day, and need for mobility.

To identify student-preferred learning styles, teachers should utilize auditory, visual, and kinesthetic stimuli; working alone, in pairs, or small groups; using outlines, illustrations, and three-dimensional models; proceeding from parts to the whole, from the whole to the parts, or chronologically.

Teaching styles may include the following:

Inductive	Primarily for developing inductive mental processes and academic reasoning or theory-building but useful for personal or social goals as well.
Inquiry Training	Teaching research methodology and skills to enhance understanding and solve problems.
Concept Attainment	Developing inductive reasoning.
Developmental	Increasing general intellectual development, especially logical reasoning; also applicable to moral and social development.
Advance Organizer	Enhancing efficiency of information-processing and the ability to absorb and relate bodies of information.

Group	Developing skills for democratic social investigation processes through emphasis on interpersonal, social or group skills, as well as academic research.
Social	Social problem-solving through academic inquiry and logical reasoning.
Non-Directive	Building the capacity for self-instruction as well as personal development in terms of self-understanding, self-discovery, and self-concept.
Classroom Meeting	Developing self-understanding and individual responsibility.
Synectics	Developing creativity and creative problem-solving.
Conceptual	Increasing personal complexity and systems flexibility; matches environment to student.

Each teaching model involves specific techniques and approaches. No single method is a universal answer to all instructional requirements, but each does have particular strengths. Some models are most effective for a particular curriculum content area or group of students. Using a variety of teaching models increases the possibilities of reaching all children and of keeping them motivated, learning, and succeeding in school.

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APPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS

Recommendation:

Maintain high expectations which are appropriate to each student's ability level, and monitor student progress in order to maintain appropriate expectations.

High expectations are inappropriate if they are exorbitant, unrealistic, or conducive to mutual despair. Teachers may gauge the appropriateness of their expectations by monitoring how well each student responds. Response may be measured by achievement as well as by the motivation of the student to strive for higher goals. Progress can also be ascertained through testing. Testing will also reveal the appropriateness of the level of difficulty, the speed of the instructional process, and the readiness of the student to move on to new material.

The following are suggestions for the instruction and evaluation of students:

- Set goals on a weekly and six-week basis to include all categories of the essential elements.
- Provide a variety of learning goals and activities so that all students may succeed often.
- Include all four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in language development on a daily basis.
- Measure improvement using both holistic and discrete measures.
- Use multiple criteria for assessing achievement and learning.
- Base expectations of student ability on their broader real-life experiences as well as traditional classroom activities.
- Identify and adapt classroom instruction to critical thinking experiences students may have at home or out of school.
- Vary instruction, limit the use of rote learning, and expand multisensory activities.

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ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS

ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS

Research Finding:

Organizational operations can be structured in order to facilitate the success of students who are both economically disadvantaged and at risk of dropping out.

A school's organizational structure affects student achievement. Research (Brookover and Lezotte, 1979) shows that some of the factors associated with academic gains include:

- Greater emphasis on the accomplishment of reading and mathematics objectives;
- Shared belief that all students can master basic objectives;
- High levels of expectation for student learning;
- Teachers who consider themselves responsible for student learning;
- Principals who serve as institutional leaders and evaluators of the instructional program; and
- Parent-initiated involvement.

These factors are interrelated and interdependent. Any one factor in isolation may have an effect, but together these factors can promote success. Effective schools are also characterized by support and encouragement. Studies indicate that administrators and other decision makers, through collaboration and effective management, can:

- Establish program goals and objectives by consensus;
- Coordinate the general curriculum;
- Facilitate participatory staff development; and
- Implement evaluation strategies that monitor learning processes and outcomes (Edmonds, 1977, 1979; Rutter et. al., 1979).

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LEADERSHIP

Recommendation:

Exhibit strong school leadership that assumes and supports success.

School improvement results from focused direction and support by those in leadership positions. Practices that have been determined to be effective should be institutionalized; that is, a budget should be provided, positions should be staffed, and innovations should be integrated into existing activity plans.

Some leadership strategies supportive of success are those that:

- Provide extensive, consistent support, including training and technical assistance.
- Provide technical assistance in the area of change management.
- Admit that innovative programming requires time to produce results.
- Affirm that change should occur in all schools, even "good" schools.
- Create and defend the time and space for teachers to teach, to co-plan, and to solve problems with peers.
- Guarantee that for each student there is at least one adult on campus who knows, respects, defends, mediates in a crisis, and monitors the student's total well-being.

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COLLABORATION

Recommendation:

Collaborate at the campus level to establish local educational goals, objectives, and activities.

Collaboration is essential to the development of innovative schools. The process needs to be broad-based, as evidenced by creating a multiconstituent school-improvement team. This team can be small, but it should represent ethnic as well as other demographic diversities and include administrators, teachers, counselors, parents, and students. Other community leaders can also be included.

The campus team should reflect differing levels of abilities, experiences, and expertise. These distinct perspectives can act as checks and balances on goals, objectives, and activities as integrated into the campus improvement plan.

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STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Recommendation:

Plan for staff development and institute cooperative decision making.

Staff development should be directly related to student and teacher needs, to the curriculum, and to the instructional program.

Key steps for effective staff development programs are:

- Include teachers in assessing campus needs.
- Co-plan all activities with teachers.
- Involve teachers in carrying out and conducting the program.
- Connect inservice training to address teachers' instructional assignments.
- Provide a well-integrated combination of subject-area knowledge and pedagogy.
- Provide a series of activities that are both specific in nature but couched within a comprehensive plan.
- Require a variety of means for training, application, and monitoring. These can include workshops, visitations, teacher show-and-tell, peer and team coaching, peer feedback agreements, and evaluation by master teachers.
- Schedule activities during the regular workday, and pay substitutes to take over teaching assignments.

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CURRICULUM

Recommendation:

Correlate campus or programmatic activities designed to meet the needs of economically disadvantaged at-risk students with the core curriculum.

In many traditional remediation programs designed for economically disadvantaged at-risk students, individualized small group instruction is conducted as a precursor to the regular curriculum. However, this may be problematic, since these students could be submitted to a simplistic set of drills on the assumption that they cannot cope with the core curriculum.

Economically disadvantaged at-risk students require learning activities that exercise thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating. They need both academic achievement and social confidence. Learning activities that isolate and compartmentalize should be complemented and balanced with activities that integrate, combine and make whole.

For example:

- Some lessons can reduce the teaching of English Language Arts down to the smallest parts -- letters, words, and phrases. Other lessons can teach in the larger context -- the meaning and purpose of complete utterances, stories, and compositions.

- Some mathematics lessons can teach small, incremental mathematical concepts in theory, such as computing a numerical problem. Other lessons should teach computational and mathematical concepts in complex, concrete life settings, and in relation to other disciplines, such as the relative size of a bean plant as it grows from seed to a mature, leaved plant.

- Since some science lessons teach abstract concepts with words and illustrations, other lessons should involve the students in complex physical realities that will allow them to investigate and deduce as scientists.

The use of technology in the classroom is motivating and builds self-confidence in students, particularly when they are rewarded for using sophisticated approaches. Team efforts and individualized projects build both self-concept and mutual respect.

For example:

- Computer-assisted instruction with software correlated to the curriculum can be used for reinforcement and extension of concepts introduced in the classroom.
- Audio-visual teaching aides, carefully connected to course content, can illustrate, enhance, focus interest, and bring the outside world into the classroom.
- Self-paced materials, provided to students upon careful diagnosis of individual skills and needs, can encourage students to learn at their own rate.
- Learning centers, set up for individual small group reinforcement, can enrich course content.
- Student-initiated projects, team efforts, student presentations, field trips, and visiting speakers are useful strategies.
- Coordination around the more challenging aspects of a lesson can support enrichment, expansion, extension and creative application of the content and skills required in the core curriculum.

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EVALUATION

Recommendation:

Conduct ongoing evaluations of student learning outcomes to modify teaching strategies and organizational operations.

Schools should monitor innovative instructional practices, in order to understand the learning processes that result from them, and to evaluate outcomes. To accomplish these objectives, regular evaluation is needed. New practices need enough time to be effective, but evaluation should be frequent enough to discontinue practices that are not working.

Administrators should monitor instructional practices and provide teachers with adquate support. When practices are effective, the following kinds of support activities are appropriate:

- Providing administrative direction and support;
- Writing new instructional practices into curriculum guidelines or regulations;
- Making descriptions of new instructional practices available to all users;
- Establishing routines for supply and maintenance; and
- Orienting new or reassigned teachers.

Student success is improved by constant evaluation, monitoring of classroom processes and institutionalization of effective practices.

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COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Recommendation:

Create campuses that are centers for community involvement, support, and interaction.

Most school districts offer a variety of support services for students and their families. The suggestions given below can have a significant impact on the lives of families and the education of students when provided in an interrelated, complementary and coordinated context.

- Use compensatory and other funds creatively in order to effectively meet the goals of those resources.
- Schedule campus activities after school, on evenings, and on weekends.
- Provide space for existing adult and community education offerings and encourage parental participation.
- Provide space for such community youth programs as scouting, YMCA and YWCA.
- Organize tutoring/mentoring/sibling activities during the same hours as adult programs.
- Provide child care through existing agencies to facilitate parental use of campus community centers.
- Encourage teacher/parent conferences during after-school hours to accommodate working parents.
- Establish homework centers monitored by volunteers.

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CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Research Finding:

Curricular and instructional approaches that are integrated, yet varied and flexible enough to engage each student, facilitate the success of children who are economically disadvantaged and at risk of dropping out.

Research (e.g. Griswold, Cotton, and Hernsen, 1985) indicates that successful instruction contains the following attributes:

- Appropriate instructional materials, methods, and approaches;
- Maximum use of academic learning time;
- High expectations for student learning and behavior;
- Regular feedback and reinforcement;
- Closely monitored student progress; and
- Recognition and rewarding of academic excellence.

The first attribute listed above is broad and can be characterized by instructional style, appropriate pacing, student-teacher interactions and student grouping strategies. Educators who work with economically disadvantaged at-risk youth can meet their special needs through varied instructional styles. Cross-age tutoring has been shown to be effective with these students because it improves achievement and permits increased student interactions. Such tutoring has been particularly effective for lower-ability middle and high school students who serve as tutors of elementary school children (Bloom, 1984; Sosa, Johnson and Johnson, 1988; Valued Youth Partnerships, 1986).

The second attribute above concerns the amount of time students spend on learning tasks. Researchers have found that the relationship between academic learning time and achievement is not linear. An appropriate level of difficulty is an error rate of about 20 percent or fewer (Berlinger, 1979). Furthermore, keeping students on a learning task for too long or keeping them at work on an assignment that is too difficult will not improve achievement.

The last four attributes listed above are strongly interrelated. The role of expectations has been previously discussed, but it is important to reiterate that expectations should be appropriate to the student's ability level and be closely monitored. For example, research indicates that homework is positively related to student achievement. Studies also show that students in grades three and above who complete their homework outperform peers who do

not. The relationship between homework and achievement is strongest in the areas of reading comprehension and mathematics concepts (Austin, 1979). This finding holds true across all social and racial or ethnic groups.

While homework is an important factor in student achievement, homework in itself can often mean failure to economically disadvantaged at-risk students who may not have the necessary time, space, or support for it. Additional after-school support should be provided if these students are to have the appropriate environment for completing homework successfully.

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PACING

Recommendation:

Pace instruction to allow effective learning for all students.

Teachers should be flexible and use a variety of curriculum and instructional strategies as best suited to each student. Students can then be allowed to progress in mastering the curriculum at a pace suited to their individual interests and abilities. Because students need to be certain about what is to be learned and what may be done in class, teachers should make instructions clear. To accomplish this, the classroom should be organized in a task-oriented manner.

In addition, teachers can help students focus on instruction by teaching concepts and skills in a step-by-step manner. A useful sequence is as follows:

- Begin lessons by stating what is to be learned;
- Review previous learning;
- Present new material in small steps with student practice after each step;
- Give clear, detailed instructions and explanations; and
- Provide for active practice.

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TIME

Recommendation:

Assure maximum use of academic learning time.

Effective teaching requires that teachers focus on each specific content area of instruction for a sufficient amount of time. Concurrently, students learn most when they use their time productively. The following suggestions can contribute to effective teaching and learning:

- Instructional materials are clear and organized for step-by-step instruction;
- Visibility and accessibility of the objective of the lesson or the rules of content presentation to the students are maximized;
- Sources of instant feedback are provided for students;
- Teacher and peer encouragement and reinforcement for staying on task and rewards for effort and performance are provided; and
- Student-activated and executed lessons to support and apply concepts presented in class are encouraged.

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HOMEWORK

Recommendation:

Give immediate written feedback on each portion of the homework assignment.

Prompt written comments about homework can have a positive effect on students and improve their learning. Teachers can use a predetermined standard for these comments and provide students with corrective procedures for the revision of homework. Teacher feedback on homework needs to be consistent and constant. Students should be given standards for each learning task so that any corrective procedure can clarify the use of all processes utilized. In addition, when appropriate, teachers can write comments on homework that respond to the content of what the student has submitted without pointing out mistakes. Comments on homework can also open the door to communication when, for example, teachers write brief notes to the students sharing ideas or feelings, including a friendly chat, expressing an opinion, communicating information, entertaining, or recalling a shared experience.

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TUTORING

Recommendation:

Build a student support system through cross-age tutoring that puts the low-income at-risk student in a tutorial role.

When low-income at-risk students tutor, they help other students directly, while learning specific academic skills and networking with peers. Achieving an effective cross-age tutoring program requires many steps. Some of these steps are listed below:

- Identify and recruit economically disadvantaged at-risk students in high school and middle school to tutor students in elementary school.
- Establish a cooperative education course for student tutors.
- Pay tutors for each hour of tutoring.
- Arrange field trips for student tutors.
- Arrange weekly sessions for peer feedback, show-and-tell, problem-solving and developing a peer support network.
- Give awards to student tutors.
- Provide role models for student tutors.
- Initiate two-way communication with the parents of student tutors.
- Set up recognition events for student tutors.

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BILINGUAL AND ESL INSTRUCTION

Recommendation:

Provide effective and appropriate Bilingual and English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) instruction for economically disadvantaged at-risk students whose primary language is not English.

When working with at-risk students who require Bilingual and ESL instruction, the teacher should follow the state-required guidelines for time and treatment. However, beyond these guidelines, there are other points to be considered in making classroom instruction accessible for the student with special language backgrounds. The teacher should consider techniques to facilitate the learning of English and developing the desire to stay in school. Some approaches include:

- Encouraging students to develop a positive attitude about themselves and the language of their home and neighborhood community;
- Working to reduce social and psychological distance between students and the English-speaking community;
- Engaging the students' whole personalities in integrating what they learn in class and the way they live outside it; and
- Counseling students to accept the new self that develops through learning a different language and culture.

Accomplishing these suggestions can lead to many benefits for economically disadvantaged at-risk students and their families. The following are suggestions for implementation:

- Set the students at ease. If they are relaxed about the idea of learning English, they will be willing and cooperative learners. Vary the instructional techniques and the physical environment.
- Provide a meaningful context for the introduction of new information and connect it to what the student already knows.
- Focus class presentations on the students' experiences. For example, include a discussion of situations that actually occur in the lives of these students.
- Give lessons a context in which students may use English for social reasons. For example, start classroom conversations about sports, shopping, or getting a driver's license.
- Bring native speakers into the classroom who grew up in similar contexts and who have dealt with language and social differences.

- Use a variety of language-learning techniques beyond drills, including such approaches as experience charts and stories, natural language dialogues, games, and role playing.
- Encourage students to take risks in communicating in English, allowing them to express whatever they have a need to say.
- Limit the number of classroom corrections. Correct errors that seriously impair communication, errors that have stigmatizing effects on the listener or reader, and errors that students frequently produce.

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COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Recommendation:

Use cooperative learning as a method of instruction.

Cooperative learning is an instructional approach in which students work in small mixed-ability groups to meet common learning objectives. In cooperative learning, students are encouraged to solve problems by providing each other with answers, explaining ideas, and demonstrating skills.

Cooperative learning functions most effectively when:

- Leadership is distributed among the group members.
- Grouping is heterogeneous.
- Interdependence is positive in nature.
- Group goals and personal accountability are established.
- The teacher directs student activities by making suggestions and providing prompts rather than supplying the solutions.

Because responsibility is shared in working toward a common goal, students in a cooperative setting, especially those who previously experienced failure, soon realize they will receive individual attention and assistance from other group members. In addition, cooperative learning motivates students to help one another learn. Aside from the peer support afforded in these groups, students are often able to translate the teacher's language into "kid language" for one another. This greatly enhances their own understanding. Students who explain concepts to one another learn by so doing. To encourage this learning, the teacher can structure learning situations with strategies that support student cooperation. In this way, students who are not achieving equally or who feel alienated can be offered alternative settings. Cooperative learning is an important alternative to many of the traditional approaches commonly used with economically disadvantaged at-risk students.

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CRITICAL AND HIGHER-ORDER THINKING SKILLS

Recommendation:

Incorporate critical and higher-order thinking skills in all course content areas.

Three important aspects of incorporating critical and higher-order thinking skills in course content areas are: developing students' higher-order thinking skills, introducing activities designed to encourage higher-order thought, and using exams and assignments that require and test for higher-order thinking skills.

Decide which thinking skills are to be emphasized in class. Begin to:

- Identify comprehension problems in content areas;
- Require students to be active participants;
- Make abstract concepts concrete and relevant; and
- Use "think-aloud" processes to model teacher thought processes during instruction.

To develop a more detailed plan of action, the teacher should:

- Observe, research, and document examples of students' higher-order thinking skills and daily life outside of school.
- Bridge student experiences of analysis, synthesis and evaluation with classroom and content tasks.
- Assign tasks that require divergent thinking on a regular basis.
- Encourage small-group problem-solving of tasks that have no absolute right or wrong solutions.
- Vary the processes students use to solve problems or create projects --

associate	exemplify	organize
build up	eliminate	plan
compare	focus	interpret
define	guess	question

In order to teach critical thinking skills, the teacher should provide for daily work on thinking activities in order to improve each student's ability to absorb content taught in conventional ways. However, once students accept the challenge of thinking for

themselves and in turn discover how much they enjoy it, inattention, and discipline often cease to be a problem.

Teaching higher-order thinking skills also requires assessment. From the first day of class, the teacher's formal and informal assesments should include open-ended responses, essay questions, and creative problem solving. It is important to ask complex questions that will require higher-order thought. When assigning homework, teachers should include reading or study guides to help students focus on the most important issues in the lesson.

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SENSE OF BELONGING

SENSE OF BELONGING

Research Finding:

Feelings of isolation contribute to dropping out of school. Schools can help students develop a sense of belonging.

All students need to socialize, participate, and feel that they belong in school. This is vital in building both academic and social competence (Baumrind, 1975). Economically disadvantaged students tend to not participate in extracurricular activities, a pattern which can contribute to increased isolation and dropping out of school.

A student will often set personal goals as well as come to accept institutional goals when participating in extracurricular activities, and this goal setting enhances self-esteem. Enhanced self-esteem can in turn improve educational success. Research shows that when students are selected to participate and receive recognition in extracurricular activities, they do better in school and are more likely to graduate (Hallinan, 1982).

School programs and practices that have been found to be successful with integrating students into the campus culture are those that combine curricular and extracurricular activities. A good example of one such approach is the Foxfire program in Rabun Gap, Georgia. Guided by a teacher, students from this community interview, photograph, and write about the life histories, folk remedies, crafts, and oral traditions of their parents, grandparents, and neighbors (Wigginton, 1985, 1989).

Another successful innovation is one which allows students to explore career options by combining the world of employment with academics. Students who are given the opportunity to practice potential professions and to serve the community in day-care programs, hospitals and nursing programs and to participate in service clubs and organizations are in turn able to cultivate their sense of self-worth (William T. Grant Foundation, 1988).

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EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Recommendation:

Emphasize extracurricular activities that help build academic, physical, and social skills.

All students should be encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities. Coaches, counselors, and teachers can work together to support students in both academic and extracurricular participation. Barring students from participation may decrease their chances of staying in school. On the other hand, if students participate in activities that they like and find interesting, the level and kind of extracurricular participation can increase.

All extracurricular activities available to students should be reviewed and analyzed for direct and indirect financial costs to the student. Fees can be removed or financial aid could be supplied (confidentially) for economically disadvantaged at-risk students. Necessary clothing, equipment, or supplies can also be provided. Where monies are not available, private sector as well as social service resources or fundraising can be of assistance. However, at-risk students should not spend excessive amounts of time on fundraising activities.

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STUDENT RECOGNITION

Recommendation:

Increase recognition of students' accomplishments or special talents in both academic and non-academic pursuits.

It is desirable to increase classroom recognition of students beyond traditional measures such as academic achievement. This may include recognition for such reasons as marked academic improvement, tenacity, collaboration with peers, and self-initiated special projects. Likewise, campus recognition of students can be increased by encouraging a broader definition of student gifts and talents. Recognition may include student-initiated projects and peer support networks. The school can also recognize students for persistence and tenacity in attempting to meet a goal as well as for final accomplishments. If peers are involved in the selection of recipients for this kind of recognition, they should represent a cross-section of all students, academically, socially, ethnically, and socioeconomically.

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STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Recommendation:

Create ways in which economically disadvantaged at-risk students can be acknowledged as peer leaders and more fully participate in projects that respond to both student and community needs.

One strategy to increase a sense of belonging is to select economically disadvantaged at-risk students for participation in peer counseling and mediation programs. In such programs, schools can:

- Provide high-interest, high-status leadership training for students.
- Facilitate student access to adult leaders.
- Encourage and support student-initiated projects that provide low-income at-risk students with leadership roles.
- Train students and provide resources for the organization of peer support networks.

These activities can create positive leadership roles for students from all backgrounds and experiences. Educators should consider a wide array of roles for students, including:

- **Curriculum Builders**: developing instructional materials for peers or younger students through community surveys, oral interviews, scientific studies and experiments, art, oral literature, applied mechanics or carpentry;
- **Teachers**: tutoring peers, younger students and adults;
- **Communicators**: planning and publishing a newsletter, developing public service announcements for television and radio, putting on a student-planned and student-executed assembly; and
- **Resources for Youth**: participating in a peer counseling program, staffing a hotline for runaways or other troubled youth, mediating peer and youth-adult conflicts, polling peers about issues of concern and publishing the findings.

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COMMUNITY SERVICE

Recommendation:

Develop a variety of community service roles for students and encourage them to volunteer.

Participating in community service projects helps students apply their academic knowledge to real-life situations. Students can also be encouraged to explore and identify changes in their attitudes toward themselves and others. Ideally, they should be placed in a helping relationship with persons who are actually in need of assistance and who will appreciate receiving help. In this way, students can develop an awareness about advocacy issues in relation to the economically disadvantaged.

In setting up volunteer service, it is important to:

- Coordinate with funding agencies and other service providers;
- Sell the program to students by describing the need and specify why they should be involved by pointing out what others will gain from their services;
- Recruit students from all racial ethnic, socioeconomic, and academic achievement backgrounds;
- Provide orientation sessions that describe the nature of involvement to help students decide whether an activity is appropriate for them;
- Hold training sessions that will enable students to carry out volunteer work before they begin -- e.g., on active listening skills or teaching strategies;
- Periodically arrange time throughout the school year for reflection on the volunteer experience; and
- Make celebrations of accomplishment an integral part of the community service program.

These opportunities can lead to feelings of enhanced competence and self-esteem for student volunteers. Such volunteer experiences can also assist students in making the transition from school to the world of work.

Some typical community projects are:

- **Community Rehabilitation:** Working in community development projects such as creating neighborhood parks, school building improvements, housing for the homeless, and services to senior citizens.
- **Entrepreneurs:** Planning and managing a small business.
- **Community Problem-Solvers:** Identifying a community problem or need, organizing a solution, and participating in the solution.

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SOCIOEMOTIONAL, HEALTH, AND NUTRITION NEEDS

SOCIOEMOTIONAL, HEALTH AND NUTRITION NEEDS

Research Finding:

Students who are economically disadvantaged and at risk of dropping out of school require a broad range of services to meet their socioemotional, health and nutritional needs.

The first high school graduating class of the twenty-first century entered the first grade in September, 1988. At that time:

- One in four of them was poor,
- One in five was at risk of becoming a teen parent,
- One in six had no health insurance, and
- One in two had a mother in the labor force, but few of these students were in safe, affordable, quality child care (Children's Defense Fund, 1988).

Economically disadvantaged at-risk students face several major scholastic obstacles. Research examining the relationship between poverty and academic success (see Kennedy, Jung, and Orland, 1986) supports the premise that children living in poverty are often in need of economic, socioemotional, health, and nutrition services to compensate for the effects of an impoverished environment. Poverty is a cycle that often affects families for several generations. Efforts to break this cycle of poverty require a broad range of services to assist the low-income at-risk student (Garfinkle and McLanahan, 1986).

Schools can assist low-income at-risk students by coordinating activities with public agencies and community organizations that provide necessary social services (National Collaboration for Youth, 1984). Community organizations such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, and YWCA can also collaborate with schools to provide a supportive environment.

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COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Recommendation:

Identify federal, state, and local agencies that provide emergency and continuing social services to economically disadvantaged at-risk students.

The first step in securing resources for economically disadvantaged at-risk students is to identify local public and community agencies providing these services. Each school should establish linkages with these agencies. One community, for example, identified the following areas to ensure a continuum of services by age group of student:

- 0-5 years - maternal and child health care, early childhood education, parenting education, and day care;
- 5-12 years - education, before- and after-school care, summer programs, tutoring programs, drug awareness education, recreation, dental and health care, and nutrition; and
- 12-18 years - education, financial assistance for post-secondary education, job training and placement, youth volunteerism, recreation, adolescent pregnancy prevention, career mentoring, and work internships.

Community resource guides and the local telephone book are good starting points for schools to begin locating local community organizations which provide services for students.

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INTERAGENCY TEAMS

Recommendation:

Establish an interagency team to meet with local social service agencies on a regular basis to address the needs of at-risk economically disadvantaged students.

School personnel should meet with identified personnel from each local social service agency on a regular basis to avoid duplication of services and to ensure the delivery of comprehensive services to at-risk and disadvantaged youth. The establishment of an interagency team may also be useful. School personnel could meet with the interagency team (or equivalent) one time per grading period to present the academic progress and special needs of their students. The team can then determine how best to address these needs. An interagency team directed by school personnel can become part of an effective preventive strategy for retaining at-risk economically disadvantaged students in school.

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ECONOMIC NEEDS

ECONOMIC NEEDS

Research Finding:

Schools can increase their holding power by responding to the economic needs of at-risk students who must work.

The economic needs of low-income students who are at risk of dropping out of school influence their decisions about work in relation to completing their education. Schools can help students who must work by implementing work-study programs.

Work-study programs should achieve a balance so that financial incentives do not outweigh the benefits of completing school. This is especially true of students who have already dropped out. Research indicates that most participants will be enthusiastic about combining school and work, the jobs themselves, and the chance to make money. However, the offer of a part-time job and the requirement of returning to a regular school program are not necessarily attractive enough to bring many dropouts back to school or to keep them there for very long (Gueron, 1984). Programs flexible enough to modify the performance conditions and standards of the curriculum can attract and retain working students.

Vocational education programs in some states have been able to provide assistance to at-risk youth. However, placing economically disadvantaged students in low skill level vocational programs can severely limit their professional and economic futures. The Texas Master Plan for Vocational Education addresses that concern. The plan's objectives and strategies are designed to increase academic performance and thinking skills as well as close the educational gap among students in conjunction with a series of career development strategies (Texas Education Agency, 1987).

A balanced work-study program includes job placement coupled with instructional modification and focused counseling. Comprehensive and longer-term training initiatives that seek to correct basic educational deficiencies as well as address job requirements often yield the most positive results (Hahn and Lerman, 1985).

When part-time work occupies more than fifteen hours a week of a student's time, it begins to interfere with academic study as well as necessary rest and recreation. When work and study compete for the student's time, studying generally loses to the more immediate prospect of greater income. Students who feel that they are receiving important skill training through their work and who have concurrent counseling and support for staying in school tend to complete their education (Smith, Walker, and Baker, 1988).

Another attraction of work-study is the practical application of knowledge crucial for students from economically disadvantaged homes. When academic courses are tied to more immediate and pragmatic goals, students will be more motivated, as they are able to see the connection between education and the chance for better job.

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WORK-STUDY PROGRAMS

Recommendation:

Create work-study programs which balance student educational and economic needs.

Earning money is a major consideration for low-income at-risk students. However, employment can interfere with studying and completing school.

To achieve a balance between work and study, the following activities are recommended:

- Seek out, invite, and collaborate with public and private entities to provide human and financial resources for student work-study initiatives.
- Inform private sector organizations about the optimum conditions under which working students will benefit while continuing in school.
- Encourage local companies to hire students and maintain contact with their local schools in order to monitor student attendance and academic progress.
- Identify state funds for dropout prevention and couple with federal Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) funds.
- Coordinate staff members from Vocational Education programs and JTPA programs in order to meet task demands.
- Adapt local Vocational Education programs to the identified needs of at-risk economically disadvantaged students.

At the local level, the following activities can support balanced work-study programs:

- Establish local task forces to identify the special needs of at-risk students; include persons from the private and public sector as well as students and parents in these groups.
- Form groups to pursue questions such as employment of school-age youth, funding of work-study jobs, and desired educational outcomes.
- Develop and select work projects appropriate to desired educational skills or competencies.
- Modify schedules and school hours to accommodate students who must work during the regular school day.
- Identify available job opportunities for employable school-age youth.
- Connect students with jobs, and nominate an adult who will ensure that school attendance and success will not be affected.

- Survey all students who might qualify for work-study experience under JTPA and obtain proper certification for those who qualify.
- Collaborate with JTPA personnel to find job placements that provide a valuable experience for the student.
- Develop ways for teachers to connect classroom instruction with the work experience of students.

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WORK-STUDY PROGRAMS

Recommendation:

Create student employment on campus that combines meaningful learning experiences with a needed service.

In developing a comprehensive work-study program, campus study groups can address the need for student employment on campus. For example, such a program could solve the issue of students with no transportation. It could also address a real need for services such as tutoring, staff support, construction, or maintenance. However, students need to have a choice about the area in which they will work. It is also very important that the job meet a real need and be perceived as useful by the student.

When selecting tasks, it is important to look for those that are not overly complex so that students and their managers can see results from their efforts. Training should be provided to students before they begin employment. Training should also be provided to at-risk students' immediate supervisors with respect to the program objectives and ways to provide students with positive feedback, encouragement, and motivation. All training should be specific and related to on-the-job performance.

If possible, students should also be given an opportunity to rotate jobs so that they can explore different careers for their training after high school. Personnel in charge of these programs can ensure a professional yet supportive environment. Most importantly, there is the opportunity to simulate a real-world work setting. Students should complete applications and employment interviews should be scheduled. School personnel should help students prepare for these activities, and later discuss what the students learned from their experiences.

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CAREER EXPLORATION

Recommendation:

Provide off-campus educational/employment experiences that give students opportunities to explore career options.

Dropout prevention programs can link school to the realities of employment. Since students need to develop goals for a future profession, these programs should combine vocational and academic curricula. Furthermore, they should offer strong career guidance and counseling components. By providing students with entry-level job skills and paid employment, work-study programs enable students see the tangible results of their efforts and skills.

Steps to develop and implement work and learning include:

- Recruit businesses and organizations to provide for cooperative education, internships, apprenticeships and other forms of hands-on experiential learning.
- Connect students with jobs.
- Guarantee that an adult will be involved to monitor school attendance and success. Supervision is the key to successful work experiences.
- Draw up contracts with students and participating businesses that specify the goals of the program.
- Encourage social service agencies, businesses, and charitable organizations to assign mentors/counselors to working students.
- Discourage students from working in menial jobs and assist in placing them in tasks that teach new skills, encourage the exploration of professional careers; and that assist the student in diagnosing what skills will be needed to work in specific professions.
- Work with the employer to set goals for upward mobility, task analysis, and helping students understand possibilities beyond their present employment.
- Develop ways for classroom teachers to connect classroom instruction to student work experience.

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Research Finding:

Parents of economically disadvantaged at-risk students can greatly influence their children's educational success.

Research demonstrates that when schools reduce potential barriers to involvement by low-income families, parents will readily form a partnership in support of the educational success of their children (Hanushek, 1986). The vast majority of economically disadvantaged parents see education as a way out of poverty (Ascher, 1987). However, the communication they receive from schools may often be perceived as either a demand they cannot meet or a notice of their child's misbehavior. As a result, parents may feel reluctant to involve themselves with their local schools. However, when schools make a consistent effort to involve parents meaningfully and to provide inservice training, student academic performance often improves (see Gillum, 1977).

Low-income parents may not be able to participate in schools in traditional ways. When the effects of social class are lessened by a variety of opportunities for communication and involvement, parental participation enhances student achievement (State of California, 1977). The types of involvement most highly correlated with achievement include community support and fundraising, attendance at school meetings, and school functions involving the entire community (Wagenaar, 1977). Schools can also work to increase the standardized achievement test scores of students by structuring programs that reach out and communicate with parents. These programs include community education programs (such as arts and crafts classes or recreational activities) where parents can become familiar with the school staff and academic objectives.

Additionally, teachers who work with parents by involving them in home-learning activities with their children -- especially in reading -- are more successful in improving the reading achievement of children than those who rely solely on classroom activities (Epstein, 1984).

Parents of economically disadvantaged at-risk students are more likely to support their children's educational success if:

- They have access to the school system;
- They become involved with the school system in varied and meaningful ways;
- They can make significant contributions and their leadership within the school system is encouraged;
- They are valued by the school system as the students' first and most important teachers;

- Their roles as teachers, counselors, decision-makers, mentors and advocates are acknowledged and enhanced through training in areas such as instruction and self-concept development;
- School-based and home-based activities are promoted and developed;
- The families' cultural and linguistic backgrounds are acknowledged, valued, and used positively; and
- Collaboration between home and school is broadened to include community resources and activities.

Parental involvement may take one or more forms of advocacy, decision-making, governance, fundraising, volunteer or paid work, personal contact, academic or co-curricular work at home with their children, and representing or enhancing school activities in the community. Whatever forms of parental involvement the school develops, these activities should be a comprehensive and long-lasting part of the campus improvement plan.

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PARTNERSHIPS

Recommendation:

Organize and implement a parental involvement program that maximizes home-school communication and interaction between schools and low-income families.

What parents do before, during, and after the schooling process affects students both academically and socially. The home can provide influential support and reinforcement for academic activities. Walberg contends that having families as partners with the school will improve productivity (1984, p. 26).

Some specific recommendations to foster this partnership are:

- Increase sensitivity and awareness of the home and family's contribution to learning;
- Maintain regular contact (oral and written) between school and home;
- Train parents to teach, reinforce, and support learning;
- Conduct home visits;
- Increase resources and interaction (e.g. hotlines and use of school facilities or staff) between the school and home;
- Develop concrete activities to help parents assist their children;
- Share teaching functions from the home to the school and vice versa so that each complements the other;
- Communicate news and information about the school, classroom, and student to parents;
- Heighten sensitivity of school staff and parents to one another's concerns;
- Accommodate parental time constraints with flexible meeting times, sites, and childcare resources;
- Use the parents as resources in the classroom or to teach other parents;
- Provide continuous inservice for curricular or extracurricular activities for school staff and parents; and
- Emphasize parent and student discussion, questions, games, or listening.

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ADULT EDUCATION

Recommendation:

Provide instructional services for adults within a context of student support based on parental needs.

Adult education programs give parents additional skills and contact with the schools as well as place the parent in the student role. The role of student often gives parents new insight into the learning process. In addition, seeing their parents read and study is a powerful example for children.

Classes may include:

- High School Equivalency.
- English as a Second Language.
- Amnesty Language Requirements.
- Literature.
- Arts and Crafts.
- Self Defense.
- Cooking.
- City and County Government.
- Specific Laws, Rights, and Regulations.

Adult education services can be varied and include different modes and processes. But adult education needs must first be identified by the parents. Once needs are identified, the school can provide resources such as facilities and site schedules, personnel, and financial contributions to develop an ongoing, effective adult education program.

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LEADERSHIP

Recommendation:

Encourage and facilitate parent leadership from low-income families.

Beyond recognizing and training the parent to become a better teacher and resource to the classroom, the school can also enable the parent to act as a decision-maker and trainer of other parents.

Steps to achieve these goals include:

- Train parents in group decision-making;
- Encourage parental participation in existing parent organizations;
- Train parents to train other parents;
- Support independent parent groups; and
- Simplify and translate key school information.

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PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Research Finding:

Preschool experiences can contribute to the academic success of low-income at-risk students.

Since a growing body of research indicates that low-income children benefit significantly from early intervention, educators, policy makers, parents, and others have increasingly called for high-quality early child development programs to ensure later educational success. Without these supports, many children are at risk for educational failure before they even enter school (Children's Defense Fund, 1988).

Schools can increase the success of early childhood education programs by incorporating parental participation. However, home-school communication should be a two-way process so that parental participation is a positive influence on student achievement (Herman and Yeh, 1983). Furthermore, teacher-parent collaboration can facilitate student achievement as it reinforces children's school behaviors at home (Barth, 1979).

Preschool programs can show parents how to become better teachers and provide them with appropriate teaching materials (Lombard, 1981). This strategy encourages parents to assist children throughout their schooling years. Also central to the process of empowerment is the attitude that a parent can positively affect a child's future academic success (Cummins, 1986).

Important issues concerning early childhood and family services include:

- Eliminating divisions between child care and education;
- Providing quality programs and appropriate services;
- Establishing relationships between schools and other early childhood systems; and
- Regulating, legislating, and funding quality programs (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1988).

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EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Recommendation:

Preschool programs can promote student emotional health.

Good emotional health is essential to both personal and academic success. An excellent preschool program can help each child achieve, for example by valuing his or her culture and home language. Teachers in these programs should make every effort to get to know students and their families. Teachers can demonstrate respect for each student and his or her parents. They should also be sensitive to cultural differences and lifestyles. They should make every effort to help students develop security and trust in the school environment, making students feel that school is a good place where they are valued as unique individuals. Teachers in these programs can also make learning culturally relevant by drawing upon children's personal and home experiences. When these activities occur, children will develop a positive sense of self essential for personal and academic success.

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Recommendation:

Preschool programs should involve parents as partners in the education of their children.

Parents are the first and most important teachers of their children, but parenting is seldom an easy task. Preschool programs can often find ways to meaningfully involve parents in the education of their children For example, low-income parents may lack the economic resources to buy books and games. Thus preschool programs could set up book and toy lending libraries. They could also invite parents to child development workshops where they can make books, toys, and games, and learn how to more successfully interact with their children. Schools can make parents feel welcome by including them as tutors and teacher assistants. Schools could also seek the input of parents to make learning culturally relevant, as well as to help parents and children develop a sense of trust in the school. Parental involvement makes a difference in the academic success of children. Preschools should recognize and encourage the parental role in education.

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COGNITIVE AND LANGUAGE SKILLS

Recommendation:

Preschool programs should enable students to develop their cognitive and language skills.

Preschool teachers understand the relationship between cognitive and oral language development: they know that young children learn through all their senses and must engage in concrete or "hands on" experiences for learning to occur. They recognize that the entire world is new to young children -- that they must learn what everything is and what it is not. Language skills are critical to academic success; therefore, young children should have many opportunities to use language.

Although cognition and language development are two different functions, each assists the development of the other. Economically disadvantaged at-risk children may lack sufficient cognitive and language stimulation. A preschool program can address this deficit with curriculum designed to address specific student needs.

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APPENDIX

Poverty Thresholds

Size of Family Unit	Threshold 1987 Estimate
One person (unrelated individual)	$5,784
15 to 64 years	5,918
65 years and over	5,455
Two persons	7,409
Householder 15 to 64 years	7,652
Householder 65 years and over	6,882
Three persons	9,069
Four persons	11,629
Five persons	13,763
Six persons	15,555
Seven persons	17,697
Eight persons	19,505
Nine persons or more	23,352

Source: Poverty *thresholds* are used by the Census Bureau to determine whether a family unit is classified as poor.

The estimated 1987 poverty thresholds shown above were used throughout this report in expressing various figures as a percentage of the poverty line. These thresholds were calculated by multiplying the Census Bureau's official 1986 poverty thresholds by the inflation rate of 3.8 percent projected by the Congressional Budget Office in August 1987. The projected rate differs little from the actual 1987 inflation rate of 3.7 percent. For example, the difference is only about $13 a year (or $1 on a monthly basis) for a family of three.

There are two state exceptions. For Alaska and Hawaii, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities increased the threshold by 25 percent and 15 percent respectively to adjust for the higher cost of living in these states. These adjustment factors are equal to the adjustments for Alaska and Hawaii made by a number of federal means-tested benefit programs in setting the "poverty guidelines" used to determine program income eligibility limits.

From: *Poverty In the United States: 1986. (1988). U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census: Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.*

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

TITLE VI, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; THE MODIFIED COURT ORDER, CIVIL ACTION 5281, FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT, EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS, TYLER DIVISION

Reviews of local education agencies pertaining to compliance with Title VI Civil Rights Act of 1964 and with specific requirements of the Modified Court Order, Civil Action No. 5281, Federal District Court, Eastern District of Texas, Tyler Division are conducted periodically by staff representatives of the Texas Education Agency. These reviews cover at least the following policies and practices:

(1) acceptance policies on student transfers from other school districts;

(2) operation of school bus routes or runs on a non-segregated basis;

(3) nondiscrimination in extracurricular activities and the use of school facilities;

(4) nondiscriminatory practices in the hiring, assigning, promoting, paying, demoting, reassigning, or dismissing of faculty and staff members who work with children;

(5) enrollment and assignment of students without discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin;

(6) nondiscriminatory practices relating to the use of a student's first language; and

(7) evidence of published procedures for hearing complaints and grievances.

In addition to conducting reviews, the Texas Education Agency staff representatives check complaints of discrimination made by a citizen or citizens residing in a school district where it is alleged discriminatory practices have occurred or are occurring.

Where a violation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act is found, the findings are reported to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education.

If there is a direct violation of the Court Order in Civil Action No. 5281 that cannot be cleared through negotiation, the sanctions required by the Court Order are applied.

TITLE VII, CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964; EXECUTIVE ORDERS 11246 AND 11375; TITLE IX, 1972 EDUCATION AMENDMENTS; REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 AS AMENDED; 1974 AMENDMENTS TO THE WAGE-HOUR LAW EXPANDING THE AGE DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT ACT OF 1967; AND VIETNAM ERA VETERANS READJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1972 AS AMENDED IN 1974.

It is the policy of the Texas Education Agency to comply fully with the nondiscrimination provisions of all federal and state laws and regulations by assuring that no person shall be excluded from consideration for recruitment, selection, appointment, training, promotion, retention, or any other personnel action, or be denied any benefits or participation in any programs or activities which it operates on the grounds of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, handicap, age, or veteran status (except where age, sex, or handicap constitute a bona fide occupational qualification necessary to proper and efficient administration). The Texas Education Agency makes positive efforts to employ and advance in employment all protected groups.

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